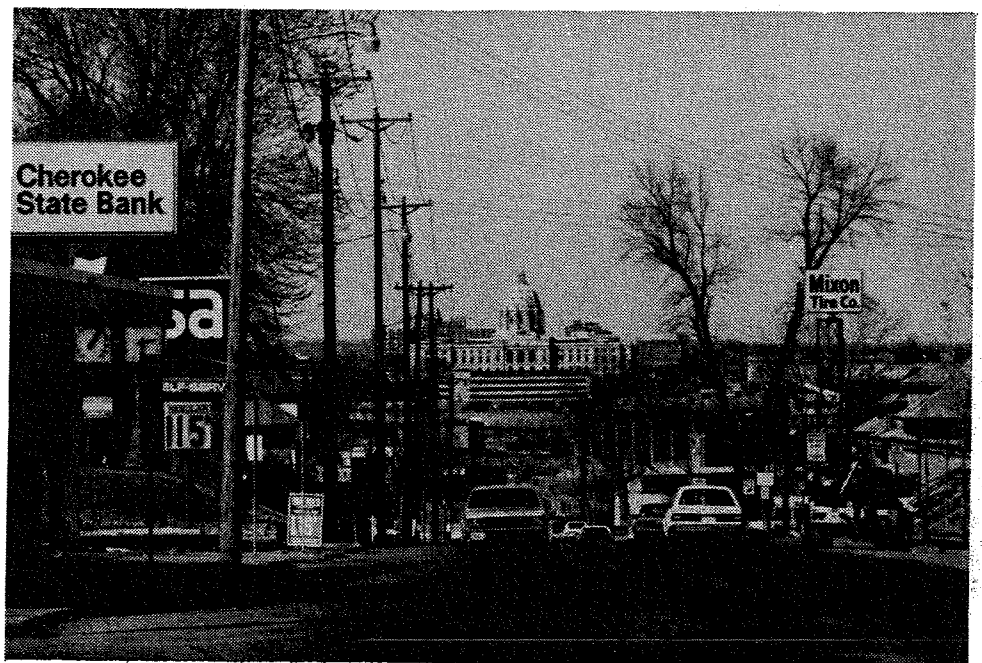


Spring 1984

Smith Avenue Task Force Report



City of Saint Paul



DIVISION OF PLANNING
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF SAINT PAUL
CITY HALL ANNEX
25 WEST FOURTH STREET, SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA, 55102
TELEPHONE: 612-292-1577

2/26/85 CC approved

PLAN BRIEF

SMITH AVENUE TASK FORCE REPORT

PURPOSE

This report represents a land use and design study of Smith Avenue from Cherokee Avenue to Dodd Road. It sets out desirable long range land use and design goals for Smith Avenue. It makes specific recommendations to achieve those goals, and coordinates improvements to Smith Avenue with the design and replacement of the High Bridge.

BACKGROUND

The Smith Avenue Task Force represents both merchants and residents. It was set up jointly by the Smith-Dodd Business Association and the West Side Citizens Organization to conduct the kind of study of Smith Avenue recommended by the Land Use and District 3 elements of the St. Paul Comprehensive Plan.

MAIN POINTS

1. A 40 ACRE STUDY of Smith Avenue from Cherokee Avenue to Annapolis Street should be initiated to rezone property in accordance with the recommendations of the District 3 and Land Use elements of the St. Paul Comprehensive Plan and the more specific recommendations of this report.
2. OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMERCIAL GROWTH should be in the existing commercial cluster areas at Smith/King (Stevens to Baker), Smith/Annapolis, and Smith/Dodd. The B-3 zoned property at the southwest corner of Smith and George and from Stevens to just past Baker (except for 612-616 Smith and 376 W. King) should be rezoned to B-2 to encourage the types of businesses that support the neighborhood oriented businesses in the area. The B-1 zoned vacant property at the northwest corner of Smith and Annapolis should be rezoned to B-2 to allow a parking lot that would serve businesses at the corner.
3. PREDOMINANTLY RESIDENTIAL AREAS should remain so. The B-2 zoned residential property between Baker and Morton, at 404 W. Curtice, and at 781 S. Smith should be rezoned to RM-2 to make the existing use conforming and to discourage commercial expansion outside of the commercial cluster areas.

4. A STRIKING GATEWAY TO SMITH AVENUE and the Cherokee Heights neighborhood should be created through the development of a pair of well designed apartment buildings on the southeast and southwest corners of Smith and Cherokee. To encourage the development of such apartment buildings, as well as to discourage the use of the property for high traffic volume businesses that would increase traffic safety problems at the corner, the B-3 zoned property at the southeast and southwest corners of Smith and Cherokee should be rezoned to RM-2.
5. THE OVERHEAD POWER LINES on Smith should be moved to the alley line and decorative street lights should be installed.
6. THE SMITH AVENUE ROADWAY between Stevens and Dodd should be reconstructed at a width of 43 feet (a width of 44 feet is needed for the bridge approach between Stevens and Cherokee), with six inch curbs, and with concrete bus pads to mark bus stops. Sidewalks should be reconstructed as needed at a width of 5 feet, leaving a boulevard width of 3 feet.
7. COLUMNAR NORWAY MAPLES should uniformly line Smith Avenue from Cherokee to Dodd. MnDOT should move existing trees to the center of the boulevard, or replace them with 3 inch balled and burlapped columnar Norway Maples, when the widening of the Mn149 roadway removes or harms existing trees.
8. NEW CURBS should be constructed where needed along cross streets in the commercial cluster areas
9. SHARED USE OF PARKING LOTS should be encouraged by the Smith-Dodd Business Association for new and underutilized existing parking lots. A shared use parking lot should be constructed at the northwest corner of Smith and Annapolis.
10. THE LOCATION OF PARKING LOTS should be at the side or rear of commercial structures and have a minimum number of curb cuts. Access to parking lots on corners should be from the side street. Existing curb cuts within 30 feet of an intersection should be closed.

11. A COORDINATED DESIGN PLAN should be developed by an architect for each of the commercial cluster areas. A memorable unified visual image should be developed for each area through the use of repetitious elements: building materials, colors, awnings, the proportion of window openings, and sign locations.
12. SIGNS on Smith Avenue should provide clear identification for the businesses on the Avenue, reinforce a positive image of the Avenue, and reflect the pride businesses take in the area.
13. A SPECIAL DISTRICT SIGN PLAN, with provisions to prohibit advertising signs (billboards) and business signs which advertise a product in addition to the business on the premises, should be adopted for Smith Avenue.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report represents a land use and design study of Smith Avenue from Cherokee Avenue to Dodd Road. It sets out desirable long range land use and design goals for Smith Avenue. It makes specific recommendations to achieve those goals.

The Smith Avenue Task Force represents both merchants and residents. It was set up jointly by the Smith-Dodd Business Association and the West Side Citizens Organization. Their purpose is to take maximum advantage of the replacement of the High Bridge and future improvements to Minnesota Highway 149 in their effort to revitalize Smith Avenue.

Although most of the study area is in St. Paul it also includes a portion of Smith Avenue, from Annapolis Street to Dodd Road, in West St. Paul. These boundaries correspond to the area represented by the Smith-Dodd Business Association. They are more true to the way Smith Avenue functions than cutting the study area off at the city boundary. The study area includes the entire portion of Smith Avenue south of the High Bridge that serves as Minnesota Highway 149.

This study of Smith Avenue is the kind of study recommended by both the Land Use and District 3 elements of the St. Paul Comprehensive Plan.

The City Land Use Plan states that site specific planning is needed for commercial strips. It states that commercial strips function best when they contain a mix of commercial and residential uses. But it cautions that for commercial and residential expansion to take place in mixed use strip areas without increasing land use conflicts, careful, site specific planning is necessary to identify the locations and conditions under which expansion is appropriate. The Land Use Plan says that area merchants and residents should be directly involved in such planning, and states the following as City policy:

The City will encourage the development of compatible mixed uses along existing commercial strips by: 1) developing specific land use plans; 2) developing design and performance controls; 3) continuing technical and financial assistance to small businesses; and 4) modifying current land use regulatory provisions to permit appropriate flexibility in the reuse of land and structures.

On Smith Avenue, most commercial development is clustered between Stevens and Baker, at Smith/Annapolis, and at Smith/Dodd. The areas in between are almost entirely residential. This land use pattern helps to limit conflicts between adjoining uses.

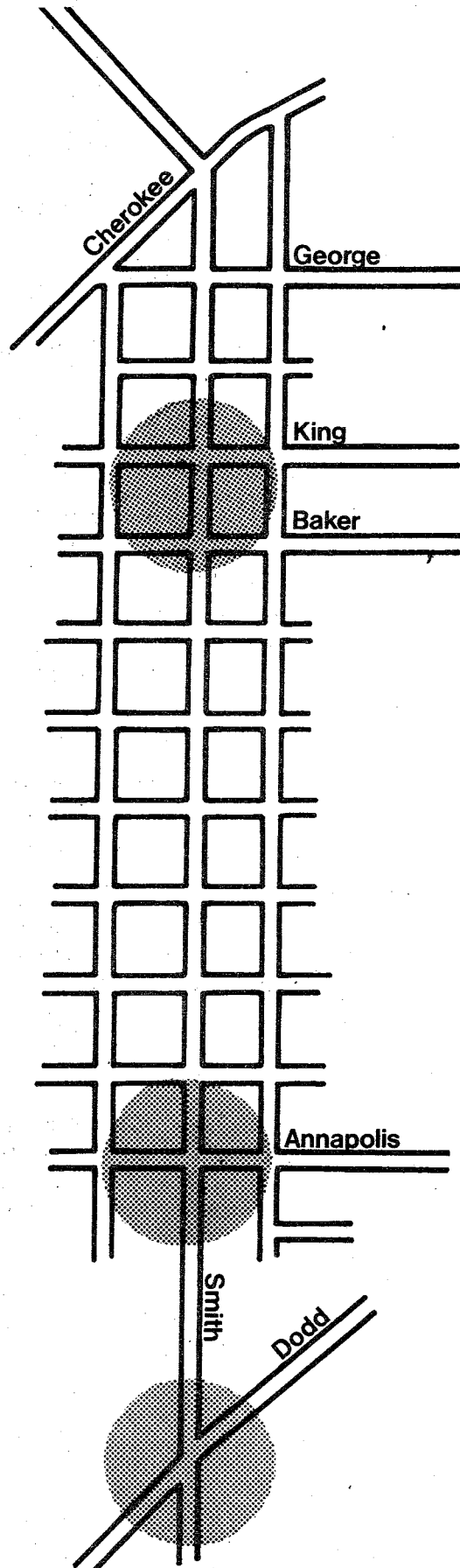
This pattern of commercial development in three fairly defined commercial cluster areas is good for business. Businesses that are close together, particularly businesses that are complementary, generate customers for each other. A commercial cluster area can develop an identity known by far more people than would know an individual business; it can develop an image of the area that people remember. Such areas have a cumulative customer draw much greater than if the businesses were not clustered in an identifiable area.

For example, Victoria Crossing on Grand Avenue is a commercial cluster area that has developed a memorable image and well known identity. It is interesting and, with its shared parking lot, convenient. Businesses there advertise together. They would not be as successful if they were spread out all along the Avenue.

Another example is Muffaletta's, which lends image and identity to the St. Anthony Park commercial cluster on Como. Because of the success of Muffaletta's Sunday brunch, peak sales at the neighboring bookstore are on Sunday afternoons.

The St. Paul Land Use Plan identifies Smith/King and Smith/Annapolis as neighborhood level commercial clusters. Smith/Dodd, in West St. Paul, is another neighborhood level commercial cluster. The District 3 Plan recommends reinforcing these neighborhood commercial clusters through commercial revitalization, residential rehabilitation, public improvements, and new development.

Smith Avenue Commercial Cluster Areas



The District 3 Plan also makes some fairly specific design recommendations for Smith Avenue. It suggests accenting Smith/Cherokee as a "neighborhood gateway" and promoting Smith Avenue as a positive environmental feature. It recommends moving the overhead power lines off of Smith and coordinating street improvements, landscape design, and new lighting with the replacement of the High Bridge.

This study of Smith Avenue is intended to implement the recommendations of both the District 3 Plan and the St. Paul Land Use Plan. It is intended to guide development along Smith and improvements to the street itself in order to revitalize businesses, provide a good residential environment, and create a street that is a positive environmental feature.

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: Smith Avenue should be an attractive and functional mixed-use commercial/residential street.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Reinforce a land use pattern of neighborhood commercial clusters at Smith/King (Stevens to Baker), Smith/Annapolis, and Smith/Dodd with residential land use in between.
2. Rezone commercially zoned residential property outside of the neighborhood commercial cluster areas to RM-2 Multiple-Family Residential to make the residential land use conforming.
3. Promote shared use of new and underutilized existing parking lots in commercial cluster areas.
4. Provide adequate buffers (fencing, landscaping, space) between conflicting residential and commercial land uses.

GOAL: The Smith Avenue commercial cluster areas should contain a good commercial mix that provides for the basic convenience commercial needs of the local neighborhood.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Promote the success of businesses that serve basic neighborhood convenience commercial needs (e.g., grocery, drug, hardware) by encouraging clustering of complementary businesses to increase their cumulative draw.
2. Rezone B-3 General Business zoned property with land use not requiring B-3 zoning to B-2 Community Business to encourage the type of commercial development most appropriate on Smith.
3. Encourage local and occupant ownership of commercial property.

4. Promote a personal, friendly, service oriented character for businesses on Smith.

GOAL: Smith Avenue should have a unifying design theme that gives the Avenue a strong image as a special place, enhances safety, and creates an atmosphere that is desirable to both residents and customers.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Provide design guidelines that complement the best architecture on Smith Avenue and that build on its neighborhood-oriented character.
2. Pursue funding from State of Minnesota highway funds, Federal Aid to Urban Systems funds, City Capital Improvement Budget funds, and the St. Paul Neighborhood Partnership Program to make improvements to Smith Avenue and to provide an incentive for private improvement and rehabilitation of commercial and residential property along the Avenue.
3. Repave Smith Avenue at a width of 43 feet and with concrete bus pads marking bus stops.
4. Provide new curbs along Smith Avenue and along cross streets in the commercial cluster areas.
5. Move power lines to the alleys and replace street lights mounted on power poles with decorative lighting that complements the character of the neighborhood and the design of the new High Bridge.
6. Use columnar Norway Maples to line Smith Avenue boulevards for its entire length, providing a unifying design element and giving the Avenue a stately appearance.

III. LAND USE/ZONING

ZONING HISTORY

The first zoning code in St. Paul was adopted in 1922 and was in effect until 1975. During that time almost all of Smith Avenue was zoned "C" Commercial, a category that allowed almost any kind of commercial or residential land use. There were only three blocks on Smith Avenue that were not entirely zoned "C" Commercial. Except for the southeast and southwest corners of Smith and Cherokee and the northwest corner of Smith and George, the block between Cherokee and George was zoned "C" Residence, a multi-family residential zone. Except for the southeast and southwest corners of Smith and Page, the two blocks between Morton and Sidney were zoned "B" Residence, a duplex residential zone.

The "C" Commercial zone was to allow commercial space, as well as multiple-family housing, to be developed all along the street. Because of the low density of the neighborhoods along Smith, however, there was simply not a market for that much commercial space. Most of the commercial space that was developed is clustered at specific commercial corners. The land use in between those commercial corners is almost entirely residential.

When the entire city was rezoned in 1975 under the new zoning code, Smith Avenue was rezoned more consistent with the way it had developed. Because of the conflict that can exist between residential and commercial land use, it was determined that commercial uses should not be allowed in areas that are primarily residential and that residential structures should not be constructed in areas that are primarily commercial.

Under the current zoning the areas that are primarily residential are zoned RM-2, a multiple-family residential zone. Commercial uses, which can impair the reasonable enjoyment of adjacent residential property if allowed to randomly mix with residential land use, are not allowed under RM-2 zoning.

The areas that are primarily commercial are now zoned B-1 (Local Business), B-2 (Community Business), or B-3 (General Business). Residential structures may not be constructed in commercial zones.

Limiting commercial zoning to fairly defined areas tends to get businesses to cluster more and is good for business and the value of commercial property. Businesses that are clustered at a commercial corner generate customers for each other to a greater extent than if the businesses were spread out all along the street. Businesses with different peak hours can often share parking lots, providing off-street parking at a lower cost by making more efficient use of the lots. The clustering of businesses also tends to reduce the potential of conflict between commercial and residential property.

The zoning of the portion of Smith Avenue between Annapolis and Dodd, in West St. Paul, fairly accurately reflects existing land uses. The block south of Annapolis and the south half of the block north of Dodd are zoned B-2 (Neighborhood Business) with the area in between zoned residential.

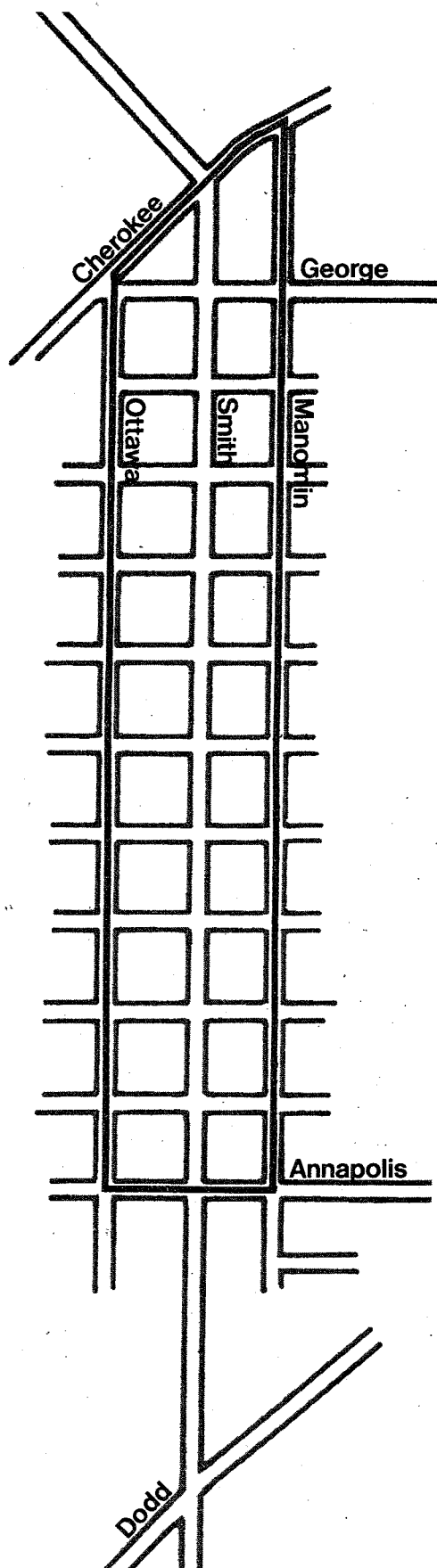
The rezoning of most of the St. Paul portion of Smith Avenue from commercial to residential in 1975 was a fairly major change. In order to make sure there would be plenty of space for commercial growth, a substantial amount of residential property was zoned commercial. Currently, the land use of 54% of the commercially zoned land on Smith between Cherokee and Annapolis is residential. The use of fully 83% of the B-1 zoned land is residential.

40 ACRE STUDY

Recommendation

1. A 40 Acre Study of Smith Avenue from Cherokee Avenue to Annapolis Street should be initiated to rezone property in accordance with the recommendations of the District 3 and Land Use elements of the City's Comprehensive Plan and the more specific recommendations of this report.

Proposed Smith Avenue 40 Acre Study Area



The State Municipal Planning Statutes Section 462.357(5) allows cities of the first class, which includes St. Paul, to initiate a study, conducted through their Planning Commission, of the whole city or of any area not less than 40 acres for the purpose of recommending that the City Council rezone portions of the city.

Since zoning guides development and influences future land use, the 40 acre study process provides the City Planning Commission and the City Council with some control over development and future land uses. This control can be used to resolve existing or potential land use conflicts.

Since the 1975 rezoning of the Avenue, both the District 3 and Land Use elements of the City's Comprehensive Plan have been adopted. Zoning is a primary means of implementing recommendations in both. In order to implement recommendations in the District 3 and Land Use elements of the Comprehensive Plan, and in order to achieve the goals for Smith Avenue that are recommended in this report, the City of Saint Paul should initiate a 40 Acre Study of Smith Avenue from Cherokee Avenue to Annapolis Street.

The 60 acre area to be included in the 40 Acre Study is indicated on the "Proposed Smith Avenue 40 Acre Study Area" map. The area is defined by Cherokee Avenue on the north, Annapolis Street on the south, Manomin Avenue on the east, and Ottawa Avenue on the west.

RECOMMENDED REZONINGS

Rezoning to RM-2 Multiple-Family Residential

Recommendations

2. The B-3 zoned property at the southeast and southwest corners of Smith and Cherokee should be rezoned to RM-2.
3. The B-2 zoned residential property between Baker and Morton should be rezoned to RM-2.
4. The B-2 zoned residential property at 404 W. Curtice and at 781 S. Smith should be rezoned to RM-2.

The vacant B-3 zoned property at the southeast corner of Smith and Cherokee is owned by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The property will be used as a staging area during the construction of the new High Bridge. The southwest corner of Smith and Cherokee, also zoned B-3, is occupied by Metric Auto. A portion of the already crowded Metric Auto parking lot will be taken for the new High Bridge approach.

There is a traffic safety problem at the corner of Smith and Cherokee caused by a combination of high traffic volume, the curve in Smith right at the end of the bridge, and the poor visibility between Cherokee and Smith. Because of the traffic safety problem a business which generates substantial traffic is a poor use for the property. When the new High Bridge is built a center barrier will run through the intersection, cutting off cross traffic and left turns from Cherokee. The purpose of the barrier is to improve traffic safety, but it will also leave any business at the corner with poor access.

The southeast and southwest corners of Smith and Cherokee should be rezoned from B-3 to RM-2 to allow for the construction of a pair of apartment buildings. Because of the fine view of the river valley, downtown St. Paul, and the State Capitol Building from this site, it is an excellent location for apartment buildings.

Metric Auto would be grandfathered in as a legal nonconforming use under RM-2 zoning, and could remain. The property could also be reused for other commercial uses by obtaining a Change in Nonconforming Use Permit from the Planning Commission. However, nonconforming uses could not expand on the site and RM-2 zoning would clearly encourage eventual reuse of the site for an apartment building.

The corner of Smith and Cherokee is really the "gateway" to Smith Avenue and the surrounding neighborhoods. Now, however, the "gateway" lends a negative image to the Avenue, with a vacant lot on the southeast corner and cars parked around an auto repair garage on the southwest corner. A pair of well designed apartment buildings here could provide a striking "gateway" and a positive image for the Avenue.

Smith Avenue is directly on axis with the front of the State Capitol Building. From the corner of Smith and Cherokee, on the bluff above the Mississippi, the locational relationship between the State Capitol Building, the St. Paul Cathedral, and the World Trade Center Building is clear. The view of this relationship, intended by Cass Gilbert, is a classic. A pair of well designed apartment buildings on the corner would frame and enhance this view for northbound Smith Avenue traffic as it approaches the intersection.

In 1975 the B-1 zoned residential property between Baker and Morton was zoned commercial to provide plenty of space for commercial growth. The only commercial use in the area, however, is in the commercial structure on the northeast corner of Smith and Morton.

It is unlikely that any of the houses in the area would be converted to commercial use. Such a conversion is undesirable. Commercial use in any of the houses could have a negative effect on the use and value of the remaining residential structures. This area is quite removed from the Smith/King commercial cluster area. There is plenty of room for commercial expansion in the heart of the Smith/King commercial cluster area, and is better to encourage business expansion to take place there.

The B-1 zoned residential property between Baker and Morton (652-671 S. Smith and 377 W. Morton) should be rezoned to RM-2.

The B-2 zoned houses at 404 W. Curtice and at 781 S. Smith should be rezoned to RM-2. The property is far from the commercial cluster areas and there would not be adequate space for off-street parking if the houses were converted to businesses.

Rezoning to B-2 Community Business

Recommendations

5. The B-3 zoned property at the southeast corner of Smith and George should be rezoned to B-2.
6. The B-3 zoned property from Stevens to just past Baker, except for 612-616 S. Smith and 376 W. King, should be rezoned to B-2.

7. The B-1 zoned vacant property at the northwest corner of Smith and Annapolis should be rezoned to B-2.

The B-3 zoned property at the southeast corner of Smith and George is outside of the Smith/King commercial cluster area. Uses first allowed under B-3 zoning, (e.g., fast food restaurants, major auto repair, contractor's shops, wholesale establishments, and auto sales), are not appropriate at this site. Such uses could have a negative effect on the use and value of nearby residential property. They would do little to support the neighborhood-oriented retail businesses in the Smith/King commercial cluster.

The structure on the southeast corner of Smith and George was built as an auto service station. The business on the property now, Mixon Tire Company, provides servicing and minor repair of automobiles. Auto service stations, including servicing and minor repair of automobiles, is allowed under B-2 zoning. The B-3 zoned property at the southeast corner of Smith and George should be rezoned to B-2.

The B-3 zoned property from Stevens to just past Baker, except for 612-616 S. Smith and 376 W. King, should be rezoned to B-2. This commercial cluster area is primarily made up of neighborhood-oriented retail, all of which is allowed under B-2 zoning. Uses first allowed under B-3 zoning do little to support the neighborhood-oriented retail businesses and could have a negative effect on the use and value of nearby residential property.

ABC Auto Body at 598 S. Smith would be grandfathered in as a legal nonconforming use under B-2 zoning. ABC Auto Body could remain. The property could be reused for other B-3 uses by obtaining a Change in Nonconforming Use Permit from the Planning Commission. However, B-2 zoning would encourage eventual reuse of the property for the type of commercial use most appropriate for this location.

Johnson-Peterson Funeral Home at 612 S. Smith requires B-3 zoning and should be left B-3. Both 616 S. Smith and 376 W. King are owned by the funeral home and should also be left B-3. The funeral home could be grandfathered in the way it is under B-2 zoning. However, B-3 zoning is needed to provide for the development of additional off-street parking to serve the funeral home and for possible expansion of the funeral home itself.

The B-1 zoned vacant property at the northwest corner of Smith and Annapolis should be rezoned to B-2. Anton Pharmacy and the Cherokee Serloin Room have plans to develop a much needed shared parking lot there. Because restaurants are first allowed in B-2 zones, B-2 zoning would be needed for the parking lot.

Rezoning to R-4 One-Family Residential

Recommendation

8. The western 17 feet of lots at 745-755 Manomin should be rezoned from RM-2 to R-4.

The lots at 745-755 Manomin are in two zoning districts. This is a mistake on the zoning map and not consistent with the intent of the Zoning Code. The zoning line mistakenly follows an original plat line rather than the existing alley and lot lines. The zoning line should follow the alley all the way between Sidney and Curtice. To correct this mistake, the western 17 feet of lots at 745-755 Manomin should be rezoned from RM-2 to R-4.

IV. DESIGN

Design choices, whether deliberate or inadvertant, have a lot to do with the quality of Smith Avenue as a place to live and the viability of the Avenue as a place to do business.

Good design on Smith Avenue has a positive effect on more than just the value of property along the Avenue. Because Smith Avenue is the most visible and widely traveled street in the Cherokee Heights neighborhood, improvements to Smith enhance the public image and economic value of a much wider surrounding area. Smith Avenue design should build on and complement the image and identity of the Cherokee Heights neighborhood. It should help to provide structure, image, and pattern to the Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood.

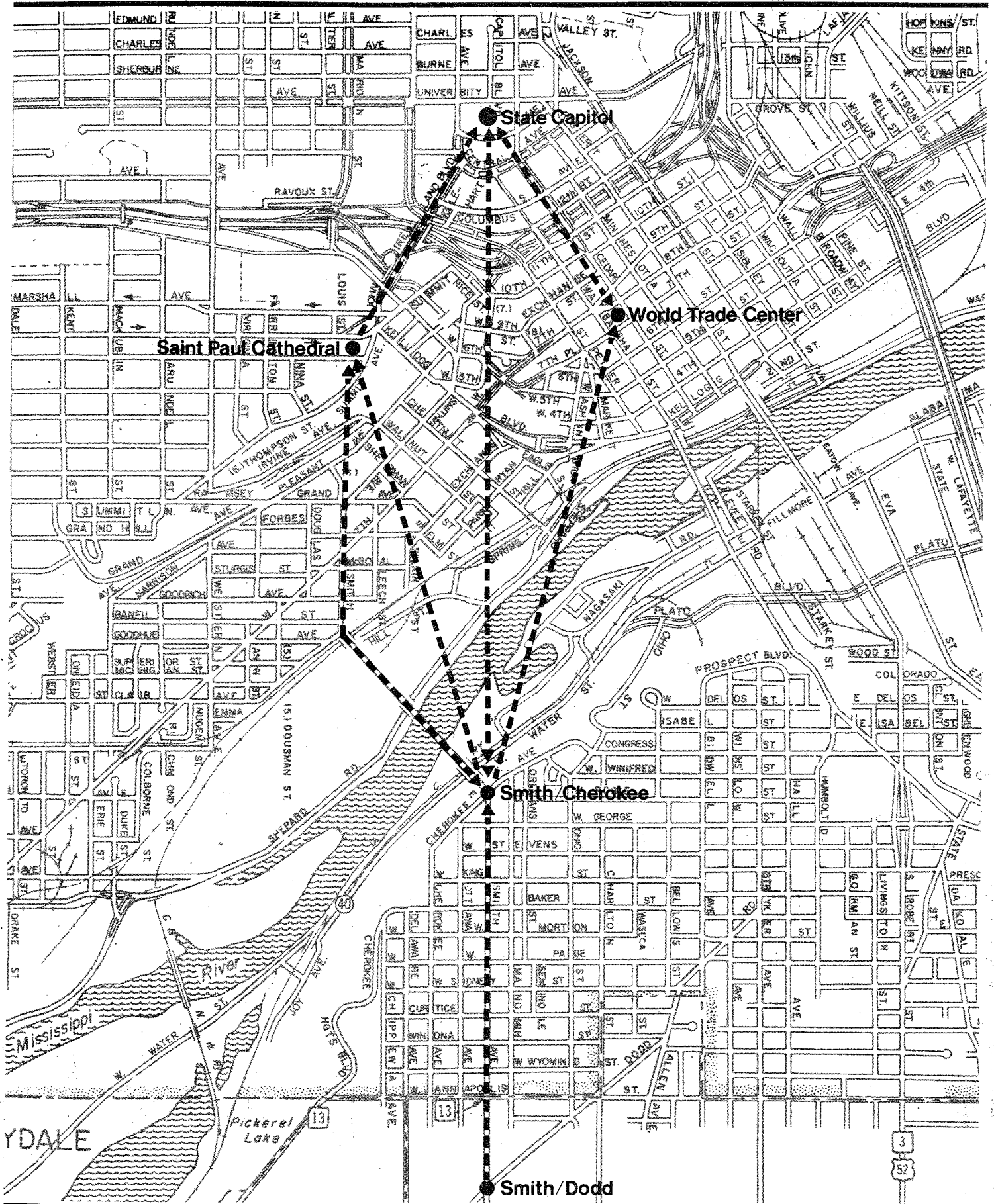
Good design is good for business. It can help to build an image of Smith Avenue as a special area and aid in advertising the Avenue as a whole. It can help to build an identity for individual commercial cluster areas that customers will remember and to create the desirable atmosphere and pleasant surroundings that customers are drawn to.

The most important design feature of Smith Avenue is its relationship to the State Capitol Building. Smith Avenue is directly on the front axis of the Capitol Building, and is a very important element in Cass Gilbert's plan for the capitol approach.

Gilbert's plan for the capitol approach is formal and clear, with the St. Paul Cathedral at the end of the mall's southwestern arm and the heart of St. Paul commerce at the end of the mall's southeastern arm. His design clearly symbolizes the relationship of elements of a noble city: a regional center of government, religion, and commerce. It expresses Gilbert's high aspirations for the City of St. Paul.

Gilbert's plan also includes a grand boulevard on the capitol's southern axis as the principal approach to the capitol. The plan shows a new High Bridge realigned on a direct north-south axis so that this grand capitol approach boulevard would run due south from the capitol steps, across the High Bridge, and up Smith Avenue to the obelisk in Albert Park at the corner of Smith and Dodd.

Principal Approach to State Capitol Building



Cass Gilbert Plan for Capitol Approach

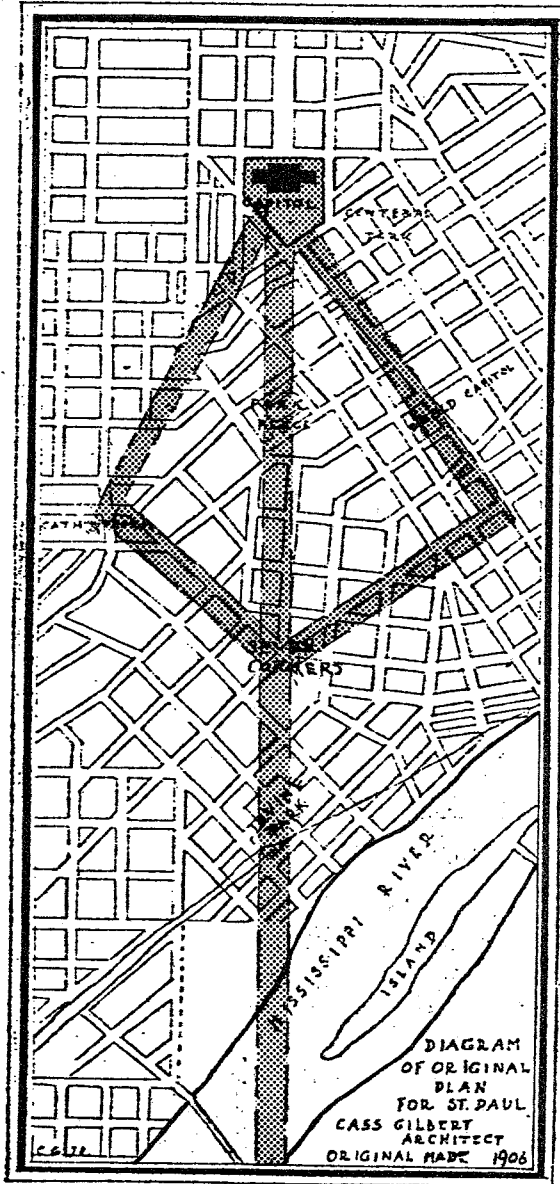
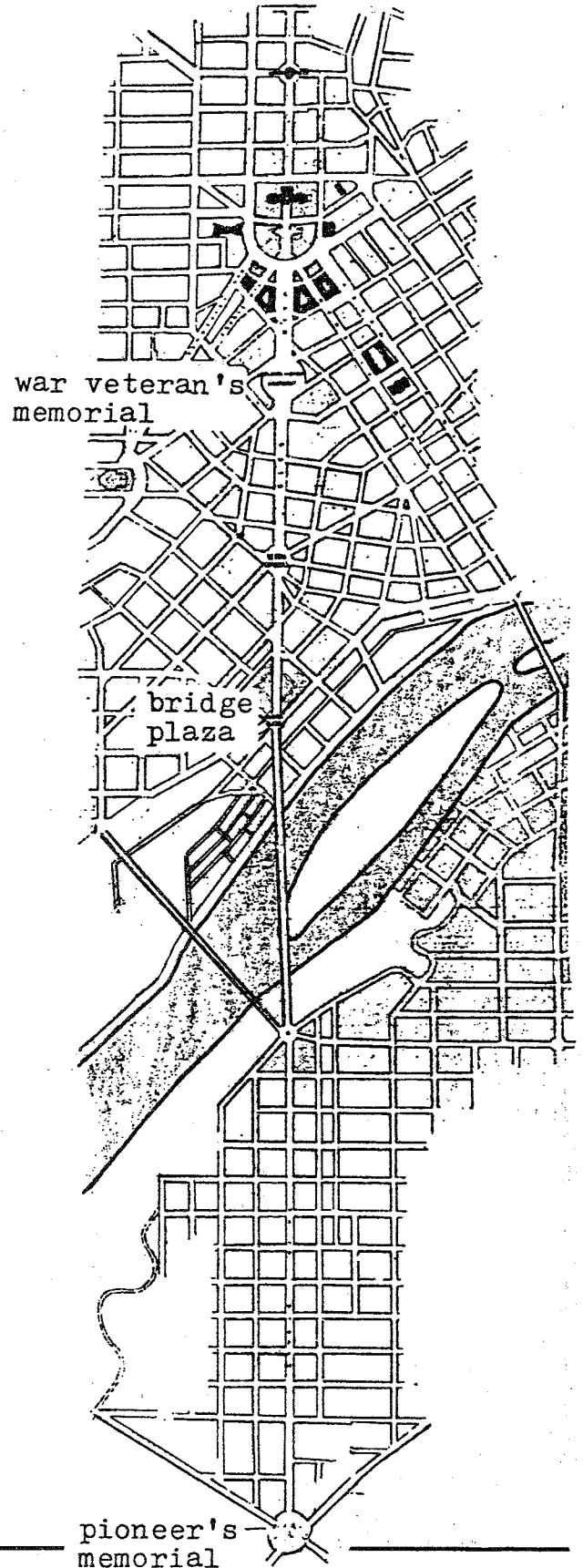


Diagram of the original sketches made for St. Paul by Cass Gilbert, showing the kite shaped plan and the continuation of the avenues.

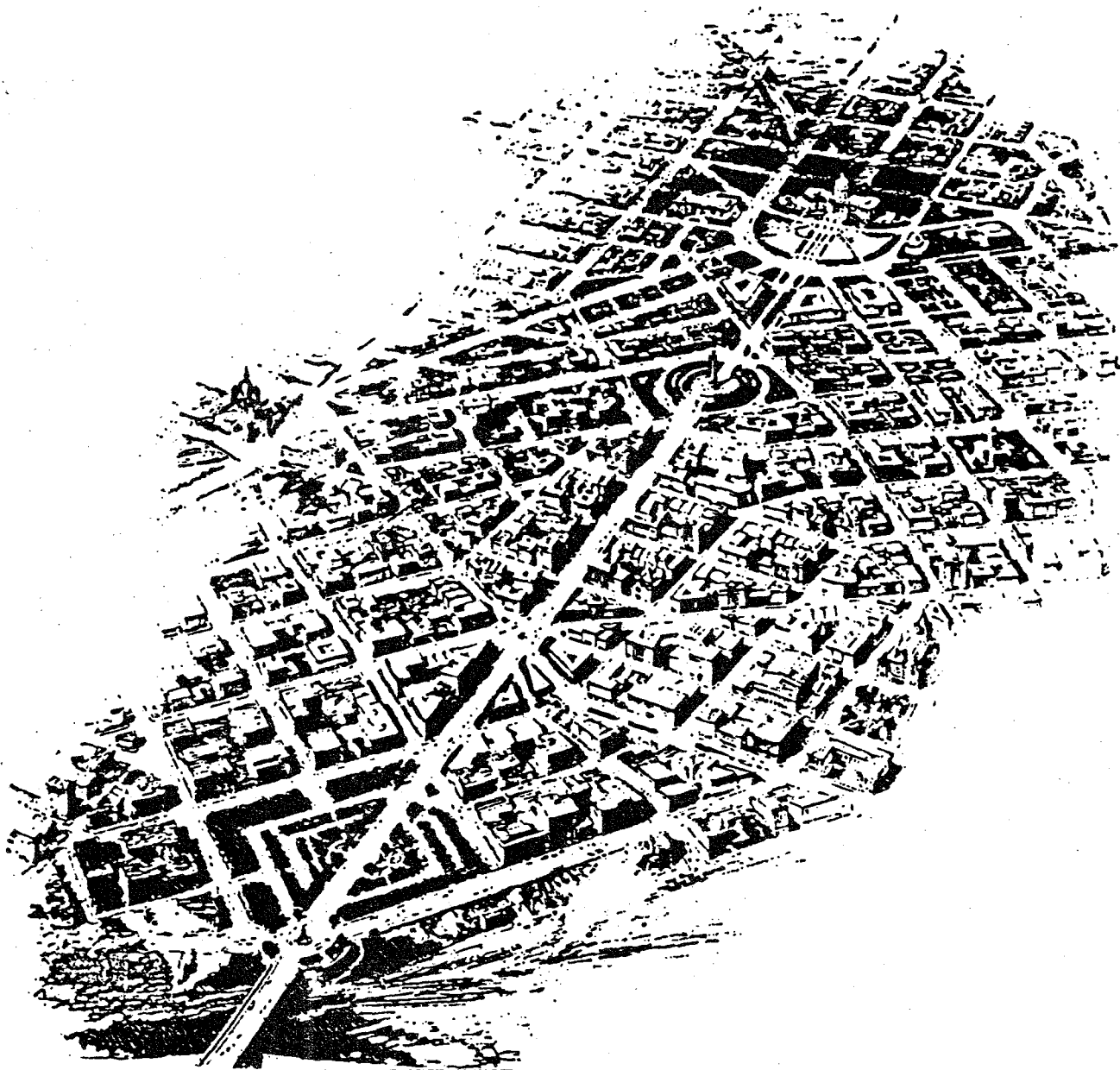
GENERAL PLAN



"In urban design there should be skillful deployment of architectural energy so that the influence of fine buildings radiates outward articulating the whole fabric of the City."

— Edmund Bacon
in Design of Cities

GILBERT's "Birdseye view of Minnesota Capitol group plan"



Smith Avenue is at its highest point at Albert Park, about 325 feet above river level. The Avenue constantly and gradually slopes down from there to the corner of Smith and Cherokee, which is on top of the Mississippi bluff about 195 feet above the river. Because of this height and slope, as one travels north on Smith Avenue there is always a full view of the dome and south facade of the State Capitol Building. As one nears the High Bridge the vista opens up to the classic view of the State Capitol, the St. Paul Cathedral, and Downtown St. Paul that Gilbert intended. This is certainly the best approach to the center of St. Paul, and provides a powerful image of what the City of St. Paul is all about.

Much of Cass Gilbert's plan for the capitol approach has materialized, and there is currently renewed commitment to the plan. The Governor of Minnesota has proposed substantial funding for improvements to the capitol mall. The Minnesota World Trade Center will be built on the end of the mall's southeastern arm. It will be the tallest building in Downtown St. Paul, symbolize the importance of world trade to the state as well as the relationship between state government and commerce, and occupy a location corresponding to that of the St. Paul Cathedral in relation to the State Capitol Building. Upcoming improvements to Smith Avenue represent another opportunity to build on Cass Gilbert's plan.

Its relationship to the capitol gives Smith Avenue a very special identity. It creates a sense of interconnectedness, and provides Smith Avenue with a sense of place. That relationship should be highlighted.

Not only places, but the names of places, can give identity and legibility to Smith Avenue. A name such as Capitol Boulevard would identify the Avenue's relationship to the capitol. The use of neighborhood names, names such as Cherokee State Bank, Cherokee Serloin Room, and Cherokee Service, can make the location of commercial areas clear to potential customers. Through the use of such names, neighborhoods can give identity to commercial areas and, because of their visibility, commercial areas give identity to neighborhoods. The names serve to heighten a sense of place.

There is a symbiotic relationship between neighborhoods and neighborhood commercial areas. Well designed and coordinated improvements to a neighborhood commercial area can visibly define the flavor of the neighborhood as well as improve the business climate of the commercial area.

LIGHTING

Recommendation

9. Street lights mounted on 30 foot high decorative poles should be spaced at about 150 feet (three per block) along Smith Avenue from Fort Road to Dodd Road, replacing the existing street lights mounted on power poles. The style of the poles should complement the design of the new High Bridge and the character of the neighborhood.
 - a. The Minnesota Department of Transportation, as part of the High Bridge project, should install decorative street lights on the new bridge and its approaches, from Fort Road to Stevens.
 - b. MnDOT, as part of the Minnesota Highway 149 improvement project, should install decorative street lights along Smith from Stevens to Dodd. If not installed by MnDOT, the lights should be installed by the Cities of St. Paul and West St. Paul using CIB funds.
10. The overhead power lines on Smith should be moved to the alleys by either MnDOT or the Cities.

Unified form and pattern in street elements such as lighting and trees can do a great deal to highlight Smith Avenue's special relationship to the capitol. The importance of the Smith Avenue approach to the capitol in Cass Gilbert's formal plan make Smith Avenue a top priority for the installation of new street lights.

The new High Bridge is a key design element for Smith Avenue. The style of the new decorative lights should be chosen based on the design of the High Bridge. The St. Paul Public Works Department has suggested using the davit arm (curved arm)

style pole typically used on St. Paul arterials. The design of the new bridge is only in a preliminary stage, however, and it is too early to specify davit arm style poles. Whatever style pole is chosen, it should complement the design of the new High Bridge and the character of the neighborhood. The same style should be used consistently along Smith Avenue from Fort Road to Dodd Road. The poles should be either self-weathering steel or painted S.O.M. #2 (dark bronze color).

The overhead power lines on Smith really detract from the appearance of the Avenue and the view of the capitol. Moving the power lines to the alleys would do a lot to enhance the image and economic value of the Avenue. With the importance of the Smith Avenue approach to the capitol, removing this visual competition from the view of the capitol is a top priority.

TREES

Recommendation

11. Smith Avenue boulevards should be uniformly planted with columnar Norway Maples from Cherokee to Dodd.
 - a. The Cities of St. Paul and West St. Paul should plant columnar Norway Maples on Smith Avenue as trees need to be replaced.
 - b. MnDOT should move existing trees to the center of the boulevard, or replace them with 3 inch balled and burlapped columnar Norway Maples, as deemed necessary by the City when widening of the Mn149 roadway removes or harms existing trees.

Columnar Norway Maples are recommended for Smith between Cherokee and Annapolis by the City of St. Paul Street Tree Master Plan. They should be continued on to Dodd in West St. Paul.

Columnar Norway Maples are tolerant of city conditions and suitable for growing in limited space. For Smith Avenue, with its narrow boulevards and relatively high traffic volume, that is important.

More importantly, because they are "columnar" they will not block the view of the capitol. The Smith Avenue roadway is just over 40 feet wide. Trees with a large crown would arch right over the middle of the street, cutting off the view of the capitol. Existing trees that cut off the view of the capitol should be trimmed back.

The visual rhythm and continuity provided by evenly spaced decorative street lights and stately rows of evenly spaced columnar Norway Maples will dramatize the view of the capitol. The trees will screen out visual competition along the Avenue and frame the view of the capitol.

ROADWAY/SIDEWALKS

Recommendations

12. MnDOT should reconstruct Smith Avenue from Stevens to Dodd Road at a width of 43 feet, with six inch curbs, and with concrete bus pads to mark bus stops.
 - a. MnDOT should apply for Federal Aid to Urban Systems funds to reconstruct the Smith Avenue portion of Mn149. If FAU funds are not available, state highway funds should be used.
13. The City should provide new curbs where needed along cross streets in the commercial cluster areas (King, Baker, and Annapolis Streets).
14. Sidewalks should be reconstructed, when needed, at a width of five feet. When street reconstruction leaves a boulevard width of less than three feet, MnDOT should reconstruct the sections of sidewalk next to trees so that there is a three foot boulevard width at each tree.

The approaches to the High Bridge, between the north end of the High Bridge and Fort Road and between the south end of the bridge and Stevens, will be reconstructed at a width of 44 feet with six inch curbs. MnDOT is planning future reconstruction of Minnesota Highway 149 from Stevens to Interstate 494.

The Smith Avenue right-of-way is 60 feet wide. The existing roadway width is between 40 and 42 feet. There is on-street parking on both sides of Smith which serves existing commercial and residential development. With the need for on-street parking and the relatively high traffic volume of 11-12,000 vehicles per day, the narrow Smith Avenue right-of-way presents some problems.

The roadway should be at least 44 feet wide to accommodate a high traffic volume plus on-street parking on each side. The minimum boulevard width needed for trees is 3 feet. A minimum of 5 feet is needed for snow storage; a narrower boulevard means snow piled on sidewalks and on part of the parking lane. Sidewalks are typically 5 feet wide, and some older ones are 6 feet wide. A 44 foot wide roadway plus 5 foot wide sidewalks and 5 foot wide boulevards equals 64 feet. Given a 60 foot wide right-of-way, a balance has to be found between the need for adequate boulevard width and the need for adequate on-street parking and safe parking and driving lane widths.

On-street parking on both sides of the street is needed to serve existing commercial and residential development. It should not be removed. Boulevard trees are especially important on Smith because of the view of the capitol. The roadway should be as wide as possible while maintaining 5 foot wide sidewalks and boulevards wide enough for trees. Hence, the roadway should be 43 feet wide with 6 inch curbs, and boulevards should be 3 feet wide.

Where sidewalks are 6 feet wide a 43 foot roadway will leave 2 foot wide boulevards, not wide enough for trees. In these locations MnDOT should reconstruct the sections of sidewalks next to trees at 5 feet in width so that there is a 3 foot boulevard width at each tree. When trees need to be moved because of roadway widening that leaves existing trees too close to the curb, coordination with street reconstruction scheduling is necessary. Tree moving must be done when the adjacent curb and sidewalk sections are out to provide adequate space for the tree spade.

MnDOT has indicated a 43 foot wide roadway is adequate between Stevens and Dodd but that a full 44 feet is needed for the bridge approach between Stevens and Cherokee. Where sidewalks are 5 feet in width, this will leave boulevards only 2-1/2

feet wide. MnDOT should reconstruct the sections of sidewalk next to trees with semicircular cut-out areas to provide a 3 foot wide boulevard around each tree. MnDOT should entirely reconstruct 6 foot wide sidewalks in the bridge approach area to 5 feet in width with cutout areas around trees. Because it is the gateway to Smith Avenue, street trees are especially important in the High Bridge approach area.

Curbs are needed to make the most efficient and safest use of on-street parking. MnDOT would install new curbs as part of its street widening and reconstruction project on Smith. Because cross streets in commercial cluster areas are used for high turn over on-street commercial parking, the City should make these streets a priority for needed curb replacement.

PARKING LOTS

Recommendations

15. Existing parking lots should be efficiently used through shared use by businesses with different peak hours.
 - a. The Smith-Dodd Business Association should encourage businesses to work out agreements for the shared use of parking lots and aid in working out such agreements.
16. Parking lots should be located to the side or rear of commercial structures and have a minimum number of curb cuts. Access to parking lots on corners should be from the side street. Existing curb cuts within 30 feet of an intersection should be closed. These recommendations should be enforced through the city's site plan review process.
17. As a minimum, all parking lots should be brought up to the landscaping standards of the Zoning Code.

The availability of convenient, safe, and well landscaped customer parking lots has a substantial effect on the image customers have of Smith Avenue as a place to shop. Nearby, readily identifiable parking is important for the success of businesses.

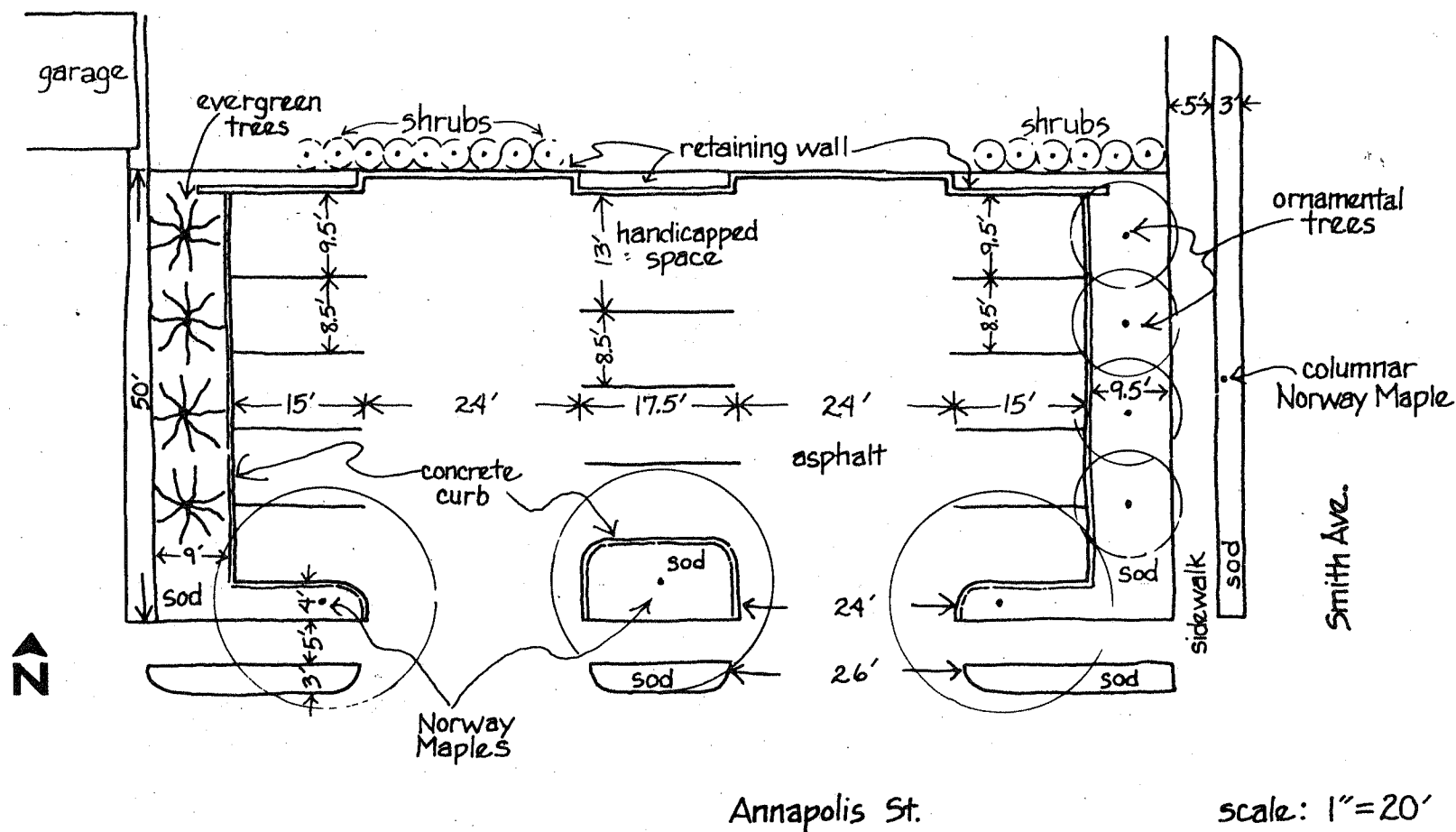
The best way to provide sufficient and convenient off-street parking for businesses on Smith is through the shared use of parking lots by businesses with different peak hours. Such co-operation by businesses can ease parking congestion without wasting valuable land and without large, uninviting areas of pavement. Because the businesses have different peak hours, adequate parking can be achieved with fewer parking spaces than if each business had its own separate parking lot. The most likely place for such shared use of parking to occur is where there is a cluster of businesses.

The most desirable way to create shared-use parking lots is by simply making better use of existing parking lots that are underutilized: parking lots that are only partially filled during the non-peak hours of the businesses they serve. For example, the Cherokee Bank parking lot, which is underutilized in the evening, could be shared by a restaurant with its peak hours in the evening. Although the peak hours of the Johnson-Peterson Funeral Home lot are more unpredictable, the lot is often underutilized and could be used as part of a pool parking spaces shared by businesses in the Smith/King commercial cluster area.

The other way to create shared-use parking lots is by developing completely new parking lots on vacant or underutilized parcels. The vacant property at the northwest corner of Smith and Annapolis could be developed as a shared-use parking lot by Anton Pharmacy and the Cherokee Serloin Room, businesses that have different peak hours.

The creation of shared-use parking lots, whether through better use of existing parking lots or the development of new ones, is dependent on the co-operation of the businesses involved. The benefit of such cooperation for the general business climate of an area as well as for individual businesses is the kind of thing that can be achieved by merchants working together to achieve what is in their common interest. Businesses in a commercial area are interdependent: they generate customers for each other, the image of each business reflects on the area as a whole, and the success of each business is important for the area as a whole. Shared use of a parking lot means the cost of the lot is also shared. Efficient use of each parking space means that adequate parking, so

Recommended Parking Lot Design



14 space shared use parking lot for Smith and Annapolis

important for the business success, can be provided on the lowest possible cost. It also means that adequate parking can be provided on the smallest amount of land, making more land available for new businesses and for the expansion of existing businesses.

Parking lots can be of great benefit to the businesses they serve and are often essential for the success of those businesses. But parking lots are not without negative side effects. They tend to be ugly, unpleasant places; they are inhospitable and dangerous for pedestrians; they break up the building line of the Avenue and can be detrimental to its image. To provide adequate parking without creating a "sea of cement", the favored way of providing adequate parking is through maximum use of existing parking facilities. The detrimental effects of parking lots can also be minimized through care in their location and landscaping.

Parking should be located to the side or to the rear of commercial buildings. Parking in front of buildings disrupts the continuity of building facades; it makes the buildings and the businesses in them less visible and leads to confusing pole signs. Parking to the side of commercial structures is preferable: the building can be located up to the sidewalk, giving the businesses good visibility and pedestrians good access; the parking is also visible from the street, making it feel safe and easy to identify with the businesses it serves.

For pedestrian and vehicular safety and to allow a maximum of on-street parking, the number of curb cuts should be minimized. Access to parking lots on corners should generally be from the side street, where there is less conflicting vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and curb cuts should be kept away from the corner. The zoning code requires that curb cuts for new parking lots be at least 30 feet from the point of intersection of curb lines of two or more intersecting streets. Some curb cuts for existing parking lots do not conform to this requirement, however, and cause traffic safety problems. Such curb cuts should be moved to at least conform with the minimum requirements of the zoning code or closed.

Service functions and access for such activities as goods delivery and garbage removal should be separated from the customer parking area. Garbage should be screened. Service access and employee parking should ideally occur off of the alley.

For any new parking lot, the zoning code requires a minimum of one square foot of landscaped area for each ten square feet of paving in order to reduce the detrimental effect of the parking lot on adjacent property and the public right-of-way, reduce the visual glare and heat effects of large expanses of pavement, and provide areas for the retention and absorption of stormwater runoff. In addition to perimeter landscaping, new parking lots for more than 50 cars must contain planted islands. Many existing parking lots do not conform to the landscaping standards of the zoning code. As a minimum, all parking lots should be brought up to the landscaping standards of the zoning code.

Parking lot landscaping has a tremendous impact on the image and desirability of individual commercial areas and the street as a whole. Shade trees are the most important element for parking lot landscaping. They soften large paved areas, provide cooling shade for customers and their cars, and help create the desirable atmosphere and pleasant surroundings customers are drawn to. Trees between a parking lot and the street can help to maintain the continuity of the building facade line. Shrubs, sod, and groundcover plants should also be used in the landscaping areas.

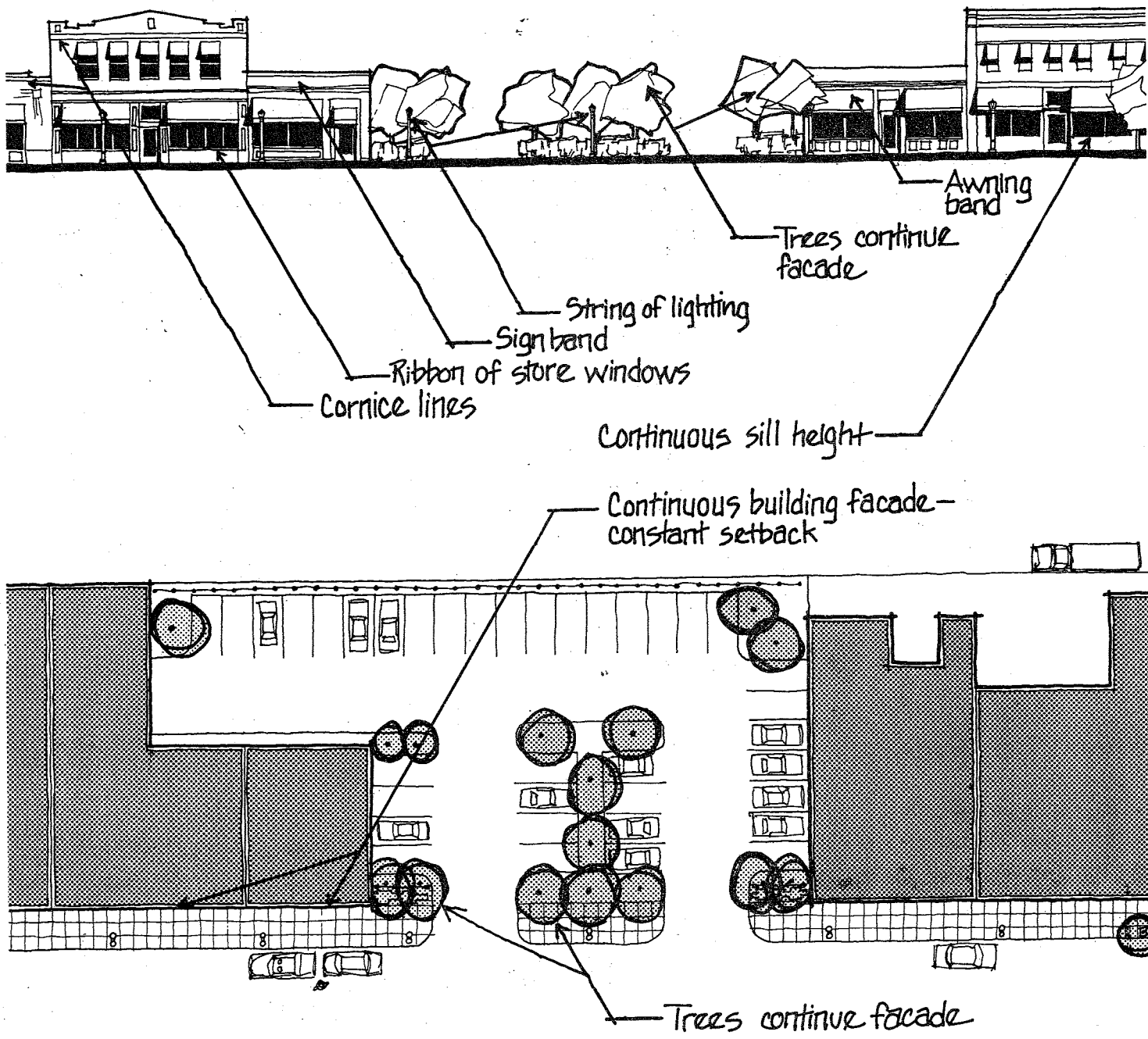
BUILDING FACADES

Recommendation

18. A coordinated design plan should be developed for each of the commercial cluster areas. A memorable unified visual image should be developed for each area through the use of repetitious elements: building materials, colors, awnings, the proportion of window openings, and sign locations.

Building facades are particularly important for the image of the Avenue. They are landmarks and provide points of reference.

Unified Visual Image for Commercial Nodes.



Smith Avenue is usually viewed from vehicles. Because of the speed of travel, buildings are seen as groups and individual facades are less noticed. However, most of Smith Avenue is a chaotic, undifferentiated mix of design that provides no clear, memorable image or pattern. The development of coordinated design motifs with readily understandable patterns would make each business more visible and give Smith Avenue a much stronger image.

Creating the kind of coordinated, harmonious commercial area design recommended here takes the coordinated, harmonious action of the merchants in the area. Merchants working together to achieve what is in their common interest can create a business climate much better than if they are uncoordinated, sometimes conflicting actors each pursuing his individual interest. In the wider view, the common interest is the individual interest. That is reflected in the effect of design on the success of commercial areas.

A coordinated design plan should be developed by an architect for each of the three commercial cluster areas on Smith Avenue. The design motif at each commercial cluster area should be based on the best architectural motifs of existing buildings there. A memorable unified visual image can be developed for individual commercial areas and the Avenue as a whole through the use of repetitious elements: building materials, colors, awnings, the proportion of window openings, and sign locations. General guidelines for each of these elements should be consistently followed along the entire Avenue. More specific guidelines for signs, colors, architectural styles, cornices, building materials, and other physical details should be developed as part of each individual commercial area design plan.

Building materials have a considerable influence over the quality of commercial areas. As a general rule, it is best to stick with the original design and materials of each building rather than attempting to change them and to highlight the original individuality of each building. Generally, there is a fairly common set of original building materials in a commercial area. When additions to buildings are made, building materials that match or complement those of the existing building should be used. Sheet metal and other materials of a temporary look should always be avoided.

Color can be used effectively to tie together a number of building shapes. Architectural schemes are most effective when they contain only one or two real colors. Neutral colors (whites, greys, and blacks) tend to emphasize building form more than real colors. Strong or bright colors should be reserved for significant detail, entryways, and doors.

Roll-up canvas awnings should be used as a unifying element in the major commercial areas. Awnings provide other benefits as well: they can allow sunlight into a building in the winters and block it in the summer, and they can provide shoppers protection from rain when needed, making the area a more pleasant place to shop.

Buildings should face the Avenue, with windows looking out onto the Avenue for view and display, and buildings should not be set back from the Avenue to provide parking in front of the building. Entryways, which are remembered by customers and too often poorly treated in remodeling, should be recessed from the facade and receive special color and lighting accent. The traditional pattern of window openings in commercial buildings creates continuity in commercial areas and should be followed. First floor windows facing the street should be large and continuous and should not be covered up. Upper floor windows should be smaller, with a more dotted rhythm.

Signs oriented to vehicular traffic should be located on the sign bands of building facades. The heights of signs should be matched, and they should not cover up architectural trim and detail. Building addresses should be consistently located above entry doors; if that is not possible, they should be on the entry door itself.

In order to achieve the kind of quality commercial area design proposed here, the Smith-Dodd Business Association must play a management and coordinating role. The Smith-Dodd Business Association should play a role in promoting the Avenue as a whole to customers, in mediating disputes among businessmen, in getting all merchants along the Avenue involved in making improvements to implement a coordinated design plan, and in exercising a degree of control over how merchants handle sensitive problems, such as unattractive signs.

SIGNS

Recommendations

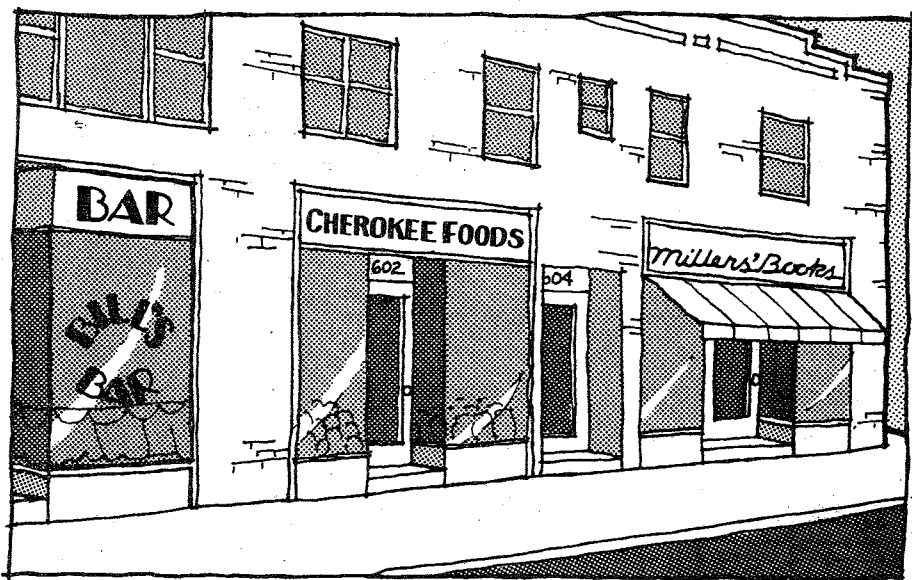
19. Signs on Smith Avenue should provide clear identification for the businesses on the Avenue, reinforce a positive image of the Avenue, and reflect the pride businesses take in the area.
20. A special district sign plan, with provisions to prohibit advertising signs (billboards) and business signs which advertise a product in addition to the business on the premises, should be adopted for Smith Avenue.

Signs are a highly visible and very important part of any commercial street. They play an important role in informing customers about the types and location of businesses in commercial areas. Because of their high visibility, they have a very significant influence on the visual quality of commercial streets. Poor signage can do a great deal of harm to a commercial area, but it is also relatively easy to change. Compared with other improvements, signage improvements are fairly inexpensive and yet can have a major impact on the appearance of an area. Signs on Smith Avenue should provide clear identification for the businesses on the Avenue, reinforce a positive image of the Avenue, and reflect the pride businesses take in the area.

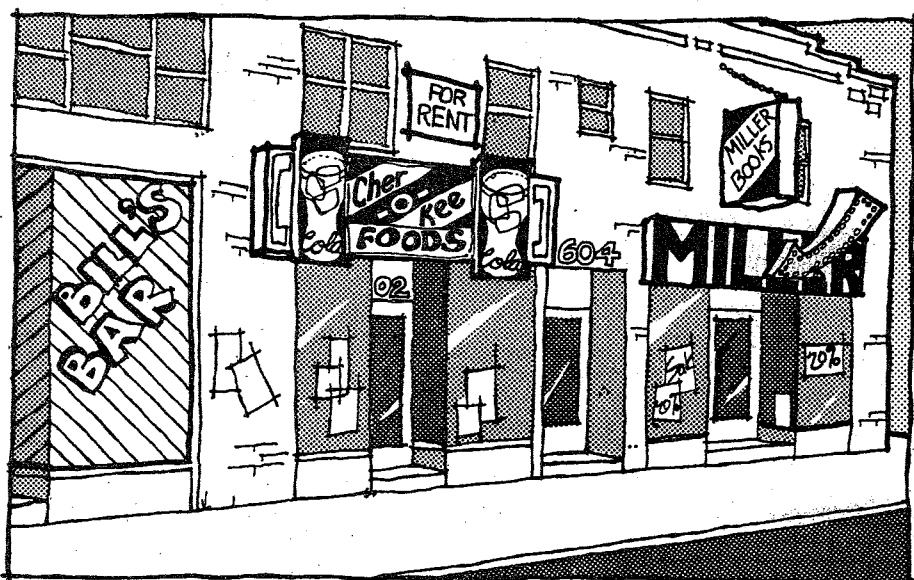
Signs on Smith Avenue are usually viewed from vehicles. Because the person doing the viewing is moving and looking at more than just the signs, about one sign per second can be spotted and read. At 20-30 miles per hour, this means about one sign for each 40 foot lot on one side of the street. If the signs are randomly located, unclear, or hard to read, fewer will be read.

Studies have shown that the most important information on a business sign is simply the name of the business. Extra information tends to reduce the impact of the sign. Extra signs in a commercial area, signs advertising things other than the businesses in the area, also reduce the impact of the business signs. They make it less likely that the signs advertising the businesses in the area will be seen and remembered.

Recommended Sign Design



Yes.
Signs' placement and size fit into facade. Sign materials compliment building.



No.
Signs' placement and size cover architectural details. Incompatible materials. Sign clutter reduces effectiveness.

A person who is just driving down the Avenue, not looking for a specific location, will probably see as much with his subconscious mind as conscious mind. The signs in this case become reminders: visual images of services offered on the Avenue. The stronger and more concise the message, the more the driver will remember.

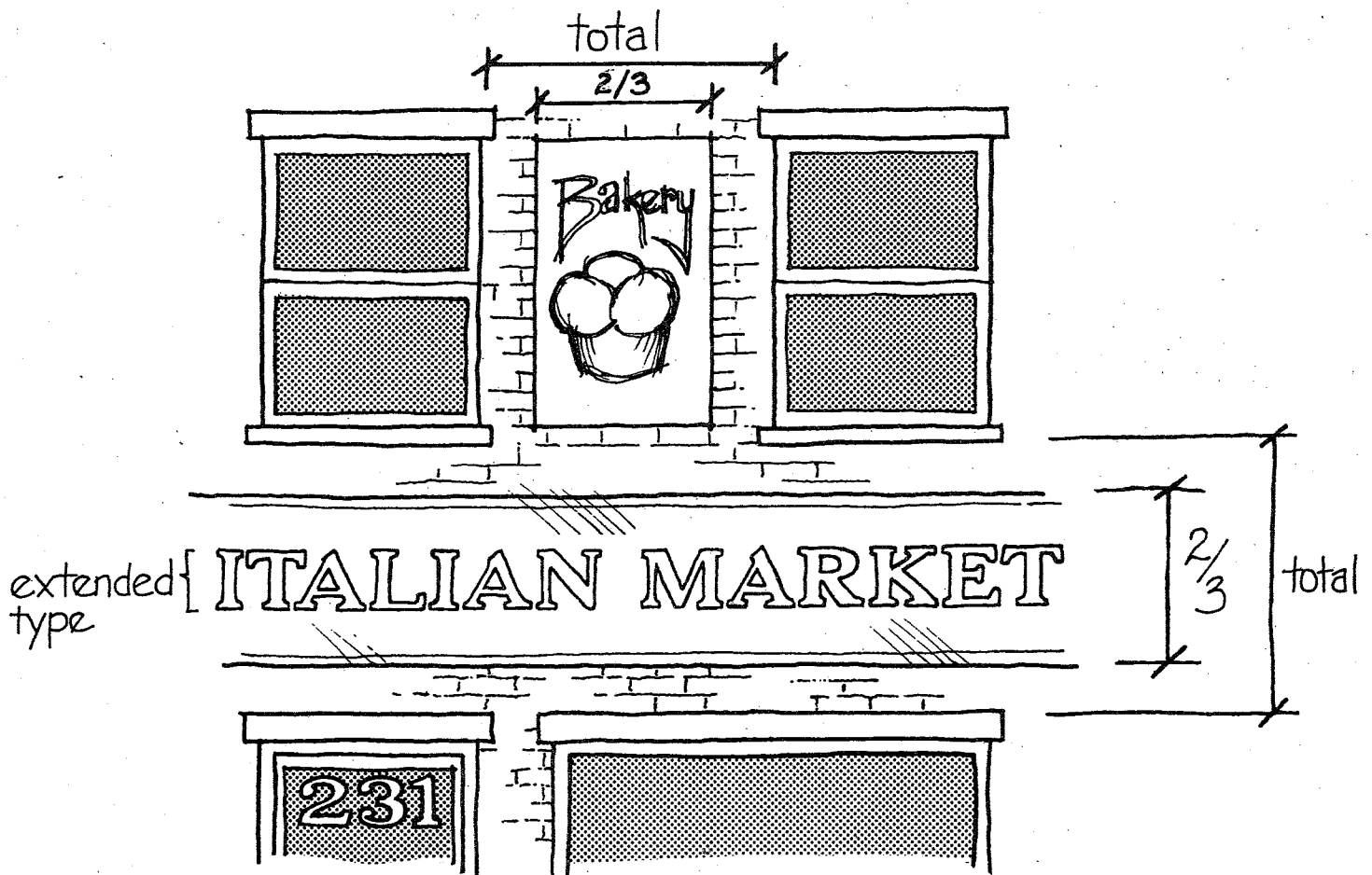
The information that signs on Smith Avenue should clearly and concisely provide is identification of the businesses there. The clutter and chaotic diversity often created by signage in commercial areas detracts from the effectiveness of signs in providing that information.

Advertising signs, signs advertising things other than the business on the premises, compete with signs that identify businesses in commercial areas. Because of that, as well as because of the significance of the view of the State Capitol Building from Smith Avenue, advertising signs (billboards) should not be allowed on Smith Avenue.

Business signs should simply direct attention to the business on the premises; they should not advertise a product. Signs which advertise a product and include the name of the business on the premises are often provided by product suppliers. Such signs fail to highlight the important information (the business name), add clutter to the street, and should not be allowed on Smith Avenue.

Business signs should be located at a uniform height and location on buildings to make it easier for them to be found and read, and graphics should be simple and clear. Signs oriented to vehicular traffic should be located on the sign bands of building facades, and they should not cover up architectural trim and detail. Because wall signs are almost always seen from an angle, extended typefaces should be used. Roof signs tend to be out of scale with signs on Smith Avenue and should only be used to match roof lines and unify sign bands of adjacent buildings. Projecting signs (signs which project from a wall of a building) tend to obstruct the view of other signs and are, together with pole signs, a major source of sign clutter. Wall signs are preferred over both projecting signs and pole signs. No more than one

Wall Signs



Signs fit into architecture: on sign band, centered between windows. Letters are 12" high in extended type, cover 40% of sign area, and are light colored on dark background.

projecting sign or pole sign per 40 foot lot should be allowed. Signs more than 20 feet above the ground are out of the viewer's normal range of vision and are of little value. The highest point on any business sign should be permitted to be no more than 20 feet above grade.

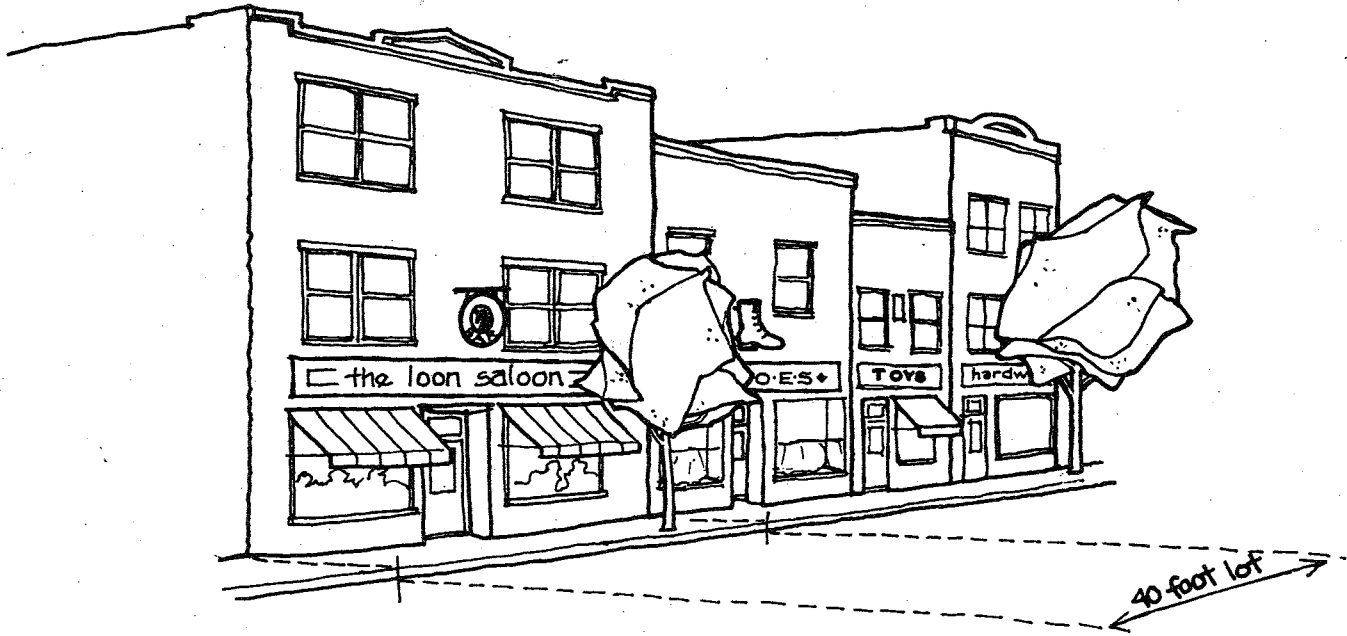
In general, words and symbols should take up no more than 40 percent of the total area of a sign. Signs with light letters on a dark background are easier to spot on a busy street. Colors used in signs should be compatible with the building and surrounding environment. To maximize the effect of the graphics, the number of colors should be minimal. Lighting of signs should be carefully considered; indirect and subdued lighting is preferred.

Clear, easily found building addresses are important for customers to easily find businesses. Building addresses should be consistently located above entry doors; if that is not possible they should be located on the entry door itself. All address signs should be numerical instead of written and should be clearly visible. Attention should be paid to the contrast of the numbers to the background in order to achieve the most legible and harmonious effect. When the numbers are placed on glass, numbers with bright color or gold are seen best whatever the lighting conditions are inside and outside.

The location of all signs oriented to vehicular traffic (business signs, addresses, and public information signs) should be coordinated to make them easier to find and to increase their legibility. Business signs should be located at the highest level: the level of the sign bands of building facades. Addresses should be located at a middle level. Public information signs, such as those for parking and loading zones, should be located at a lower level.

Public signs should be located on the fewest possible number of poles. As much as possible, they should be limited to light poles, with no more than two signs per pole. Unnecessary public signage should be removed. All street light poles, sign poles, traffic signals, etc., should be painted S.O.M.#2 (dark bronze color) as repainting is necessary.

Projecting Signs



Projecting signs don't block other signs. 40 foot spacing.
12 square foot sign area.

The Zoning Code includes basic sign regulations governing such things as the type, size and height of signs allowed in the various zoning districts and the setback of signs from street and property lines. It also provides for the creation of special district sign plans which may include regulations for signs more or less restrictive than those specified in the Zoning Code. The intent behind that provision is to encourage specific areas in the city to develop sign controls that build on the unique character and identity of those areas. To help develop a more desirable and memorable image for Smith Avenue and Smith Avenue businesses, and especially because of the importance of the Smith Avenue approach to the capitol, such a special district sign plan should be adopted for Smith Avenue.

The Smith Avenue Special District Sign Plan should prohibit advertising signs (billboards) and business signs which advertise a product in addition to the business on the premises (signs which lawfully existed before adoption of the plan would be allowed to remain). It should allow only one projecting or pole sign per 40 foot lot, and permit the highest point on any business sign to be no more than 20 feet above grade.

V. ACTION PLAN

PROJECT	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	PROJECT PLANNING NEEDED	TIMING AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROJECTS	POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCE	REFERENCE FOR EXPLANATION
1. Smith Avenue 40 acre study rezonings	Planning Commission, City Council	No	1984	---	III. 1-8 on pp. 7-15
2. Decorative street lights	MnDOT, WSCO, City Councils of St. Paul and West St. Paul	Yes, by MnDOT and Public Works Dept.	1986 Coordinate with design and construction of new High Bridge and with Highway 149 reconstruction	State Highway Funds, City CIB Funds	IV. 9 on pp. 21-22
3. Move overhead power lines to alley	MnDOT, WSCO, City Councils of St. Paul and West St. Paul	Yes, by MnDOT and Public Works Dept.	1986 Coordinate with installation of new decorative street lights	State Highway Funds, City CIB Funds	IV. 10 on pp. 21-22
4. Boulevard tree planting	City Foresters of St. Paul and West St. Paul	Yes, by City Foresters	1986 Coordinate with Highway 149 reconstruction	CIB	IV. 11 on pp. 22-23
5. Smith Avenue roadway reconstruction	MnDOT	Yes, by MnDOT	1986	FAU, State Highway Funds	IV. 12 on pp. 23-24
6. New curbs on cross streets (King, Baker, and Annapolis)	City Council	Yes, by Public Works Department	1986	CIB	IV. 13 on pp. 23
7. Shared use parking lot at Smith and Annapolis	Smith/Annapolis businesses	Yes, by architect	1984	Private	IV. 15 on pp. 25-27
8. Enforcement of parking lot location and access standards	Planning Division	No	Ongoing	---	IV. 16 on pp. 25-29

V. ACTION PLAN (CONTINUED)

PROJECT	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	PROJECT PLANNING NEEDED	TIMING AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROJECTS	POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCE	REFERENCE FOR EXPLANATION
9. Commercial cluster coordinated design plans	Smith-Dodd Business Association, West Side Development Corporation	Yes, by architect	1984-87	Private	IV. 18 on pp. 29-32
10. Enforcement of facade design guidelines	Planning Division	Coordinated design plans for commercial cluster areas	Ongoing	---	IV. 18 on pp. 29-32
11. Adoption of Smith Avenue Special District Sign Plan	Planning Commission, City Council	No	1984	---	IV. 20 on pp. 33-39

CREDITS

SMITH AVENUE TASK FORCE

Smith-Dodd Business Association

Jim Gesell, Chair, Cherokee Bank
Tom Casper, Cherokee Serloin Room
Bill Rascher, Rascher Plumbing and Heating

West Side Citizens Organization

Harlan Barry
Adolf Vandendorpe

West Side Development Corporation

Rick Aguilar, Squire Barber Shop
Tom Robinson, Attorney at Law

Smith Avenue Residents

Francis Becker
Marjorie Neihart

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

James Bellus, AICP, Director
Peggy Reichert, Deputy Director for Planning
Lawrence Soderholm, AICP, Principal Planner
Allan Torstenson, AICP, Planner-In-Charge